

Message Text

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SUBJECT: EDITORIAL IN THE IRISH TIMES JUNE 28, 1978

FOLLOWING EDITORIAL APPEARED IN THE IRISH TIMES, JUNE
28, 1978 UNDER THE HEADING A PRESENT FOR MOSCOW.

ALL SIGNS ARE THAT THE SOVIET UNION HAS GOOD REASON
TO CONGRATULATE ITSELF ON WHAT HAS HAPPENED IN SOUTH
YEMEN. THE COUP, WHICH LED TO THE EXECUTION ON
MONDAY OF PRESIDENT SALEM ROBAYA ALI, HAS REPLACED
HIM WITH A LEADERSHIP WHOLEHEARTEDLY DEVOTED TO
THE CAUSE OF RUSSIA IN AFRICA. THE DEAD PRESIDENT
HAD STARTED HIS CAREER IN OFFICE AS A CONVINCED MARXIST
BUT IN THE LAST TWO YEARS HIS ENTHUSIASM HAD
DIMINISHED, AND HE HAD EMBARKED ON A MORE CONCILIATORY
POLICY TOWARDS HIS CONSERVATIVE NEIGHBOURS, NORTH
YEMEN, AND-MORE SIGNIFICANTLY-SAUDI ARABIA.

THIS CHANGE OF ATTITUDE, THOUGH CAUTIOUS, SPASMODIC
AND HEAVILY QUALIFIED, AROUSED THE FATAL OPPOSITION
OF MR. ABDEL FATTAH ISMAIL, THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF
THE RULING NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT, WHOSE DEVOTION
TO THE KREMLIN LINE HAS BEEN UNDEVIATING. HE
DISAPPROVED NOT ONLY OF THE MOST TENTATIVE FLIRTATION
WITH SAUDI ARABIA AND NORTH YEMEN, BUT OF PRESIDENT
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PAGE 02 DUBLIN 02019 281611Z

ALI'S RELUCTANCE TO PROVIDE THE RUSSIANS WITH KEY
NAVAL BASES. MOREOVER, ALI'S RADICALISM WAS CHINA-
ORIENTATED, AND AT ONE STAGE OF HIS CAREER, HE HAD
WITHDRAWN MILITARY AIRCRAFT WHICH HAD BEEN SENT
TO HELP ETHIOPIA AGAINST THE SOMALIS AND ERITREANS.

THESE WERE ALL SUFFICIENT REASONS, SO FAR AS MR. ISMAIL

AND HIS ASSOCIATES WERE CONCERNED, FOR GETTING RID OF THE PRESIDENT, THOUGH THEY OFFICIALLY CLAIM TO HAVE ACTED BECAUSE HE PLANNED TO USURP THE FUNCTIONS OF THE COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP. IT IS POSSIBLE, HOWEVER, THAT THE EXECUTIVE WILL BE RESENTED BY A SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER OF SOUTH YEMENIS, AMONG WHOM ALI WAS GENERALLY POPULAR; AND SOME OF THE FIGHTING IN AND AROUND ADEN IN THE LAST COUPLE OF DAYS HAS INVOLVED UNITS OF THE ARMY LOYAL TO THE DEAD MAN.

MR. ISMAIL, HOWEVER, IS UNLIKELY TO BE GREATLY TROUBLED BY THE THREAT OF INTERMITTENT DISCONTENT. THERE ARE SIZEABLE CONTINGENTS OF CUBAN AND EAST GERMAN ADVISERS ALREADY IN THE COUNTRY: MORE, NO DOUBT, WOULD BE READILY AVAILABLE TO UNDERTAKE WHAT ARE EUPHEMISTICALLY KNOWN AS "POLICE DUTIES," IF THE NEED SHOULD ARISE. FROM NOW ON, IT MAY BE ASSUMED THAT SOUTH YEMEN IS AN OUTPOST OF THE SOVIET EMPIRE.

STRATEGICALLY, IT IS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT OF SUCH OUTPOSTS, CAPABLE OF PROVIDING PRIME ACCESS TO, AND CONTROL OF, THE RED SEA, THE ARABIAN GULF, AND AN OUTLET TO THE INDIAN OCEAN. IT BIDS FAIR TO BECOME A THREAT TO SAUDI ARABIA AND ITS OIL PRODUCTION. YESTERDAY, THE EGYPTIAN SEMI-OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER, AL AHRAH, GLOOMILY FORECAST THAT THE CONFLICT IN THE HORN OF AFRICA WOULD

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PAGE 03 DUBLIN 02019 281611Z

BE TRANSLATED TO THE EAST COAST OF THE RED SEA AND TO THE SOUTH OF ARABIAN PENINSULA.

IF THIS HAPPENS, IT WILL AMOUNT TO A MAJOR SHIFT IN THE BALANCE OF POWER IN A MOST CRITICAL AREA, WHICH MUST CAUSE IMMEDIATE AND ACUTE CONCERN TO THE WESTERN WORLD. SOVIET INTERESTS AND INFLUENCE POTENTIALLY HAVE BEEN ENORMOUSLY ADVANCED. KRENE

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